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# THEODORE ROOSEVELT

## SENIOR

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NEW YORK

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# THEODORE ROOSEVELT

SENIOR

## A TRIBUTE

THE PROCEEDINGS AT A MEETING OF THE
UNION LEAGUE CLUB NEW YORK CITY
FEBRUARY 14 1878

NEW YORK
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1902

IN the various accounts of President Theodore Roosevelt many errors have been made as to his direct ancestry, and many have failed to connect him with his father, the late Theodore Roosevelt (Senior), who was so greatly beloved and respected during his useful life in New York City.

It has therefore been suggested that I should reprint a letter read at the Memorial Meeting of the Union League Club in February, 1878, which gives an account of some of the many forms of civic and philanthropic usefulness, which made Mr. Theodore Roosevelt (Senior) such a power and influence for good. Few men have left so deep an impress upon a community, or bequeathed to a son so splendid a legacy of earnest devoted and patriotic service.

WILLIAM E. DODGE.

April, 1902.

## THEODORE ROOSEVELT SR

AT a meeting of the Union League Club of New York City, held February 14, 1878, the following action was taken as to the death of the late Theodore Roosevelt:

After the regular business of the Club had been transacted, Mr. Joseph H. Choate arose, and, in an eloquent and fitting speech,* offered a series of resolutions upon the death of Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, who was one of the Vice-Presidents of the Union League, and who had for years taken an active interest in the affairs of the Club. Mr. Choate at some length rehearsed the story of Mr. Roosevelt's public life, calling attention to the practical manner in which Mr. Roosevelt managed the many charitable works which he in his lifetime was busily and constantly engaged in. Mr. Choate said that he considered

*Unfortunately no record of this address has been preserved.

Mr. Roosevelt as the most unselfish citizen of all the unselfish citizens in this great city, and that, although Mr. Roosevelt was only in the forty-eighth year of his age, he had accomplished more good than men who had lived active lives for many more years than Mr. Roosevelt had been spared in which to do his good work among men. It seemed, said Mr. Choate, as if he, like Joshua, had commanded the sun of his life to stand still in order that he might accomplish the fullest measure of his life's work. Mr. Choate read the following letter from Mr. William E. Dodge, Jr., who was an intimate friend of Mr. Roosevelt, and associated with him in many of his public and private charities.

# LETTER OF
# WILLIAM E. DODGE JR

## LETTER FROM WILLIAM E. DODGE JR

New York, February 12, 1878.

My Dear Mr. Choate:

Mr. Roosevelt was so identified with the best work and the most successful years of the Union League Club that it seems to me peculiarly fitting it should take special notice of the great loss it has sustained by his death.

I regret I cannot be present at the meeting, and if I could, after so many years of active work with him, my love for his memory is so great and my sense of personal loss so keen, I dare not trust myself to speak of him as I would.

I know you will permit me to tell you of some reasons why we should, as a club, talk of him together before we sacredly and tenderly lay by his life in our memories.

I first knew him well, as did some others among us, in the six years before the war.

With earnest Christian principle he had devoted his life, with fixed purpose and with great self-sacrifice and devotion, to working for others. He gave the best and largest part of his time outside of his business to cheerful, organized labor among the poor and unfortunate in the eastern part of the city. His steady work in the tenement houses, and his teaching and personal influence on the Sunday and during the week, gave him a wonderful drill and education.

They developed in him a rare and tender sympathy for all who were unfortunate or needy and great executive power in working for them.

When the shadows of the coming war began to grow into a reality he threw himself with all heart and soul into work for the country.

From peculiar circumstances he was unable to volunteer for military service, as was his wish, but he began at once to develop practical plans of usefulness to help those who had gone to the front.

He became an active worker on the Advisory Board of the Woman's Central Association of Relief, that wonderful and far-reaching organiza-

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tion of patriotic women out of which grew the Sanitary Commission.

He worked with the "Loyal Publication Society," which, as many of our members know, was a most active and useful educating power in the days when there was great ignorance as to the large issues of the conflict.

He joined enthusiastically in the organization of the Union League Club, was for years a most valued member of its executive committees and aided in the raising and equipment of the first colored troops.

His great practical good sense led him to see needs which escaped most other minds. He felt that the withdrawal from the homes of so many enlisted men would leave great want in many sections of the country. He saw the soldiers were more than amply clothed and fed, and their large pay wasted mostly among the sutlers, and for purposes which injured their health and efficiency. So with two others he drafted a bill for the appointment of Allotment Commissioners, who without pay should act for the War Department

and arrange to send home to needy families, without risk or cost, the money not needed in the camps. For three months they worked in Washington to secure the passage of this act—delayed by the utter inability of Congressmen to understand why any one should urge a bill from which no one could selfishly secure an advantage.

When this was passed he was appointed by President Lincoln one of the three Commissioners from this State. For long, weary months, in the depth of a hard winter, he went from camp to camp, urging the men to take advantage of this plan.

On the saddle often six to eight hours a day, standing in the cold and mud as long, addressing the men and entering their names.

This resulted in sending many millions of dollars to homes where it was greatly needed, kept the memory of wives and children fresh in the minds of the soldiers, and greatly improved their morale. Other States followed, and the economical results were very great.

Towards the close of the war, finding the crippled soldiers and the families of those who had fallen were suffering for back pay due and for pensions, and that a race of greedy and wicked men were taking advantage of their needs to plunder them, he joined in organizing the Protective War-Claim Association, which without charge collected these dues. This saved to soldiers' families more than $1,000,000 of fees.

He also devised and worked heartily in the Soldiers' Employment Bureau, which found fitting work for the crippled men who by loss of limb were unfitted for their previous occupations. This did wonders towards absorbing into the population of the country those who otherwise would have been dependent, and preserved the self-respect of the men. I believe it did more and vastly better work than all the "Soldiers' homes" combined. For the work in the Allotment Commission he received the special and formal thanks of the State in a joint resolution of the Legislature.

During all the time following the war he was most actively engaged in the work of the Children's

Aid Society, caring personally for the poor boys under its care. He also organized and established a hospital for those suffering from diseases of the spine and hip, which has done great good.

His practical work and great good sense in his attempts to unify the charities of the city, his generous help in the State Charities Aid Association, the vim and courage which he threw into the executive committees of the Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in their days of greatest need—and especially the ripe, mature and grand work of the last few years as the practical head of the State Board of Charities—are known to all of us.

I have said nothing of his work in the Church; of his steady, unfaltering patriotism; of his efforts for civil-service reform; of his sweet, strong influence in his home and among his friends.

Thoroughly and strangely unselfish, with untiring energy and bright cheerfulness, he literally "went about doing good."

Sound, careful, and with marvelous good judgment, he added to these qualities a magnetic

power in influencing others I have never seen equalled. In thinking of him two things strike me most deeply:

When he saw a practical means of help to any needy ones—where others would have hesitated and shirked responsibility—he acted immediately.

And then his uniform, sunny brightness, which melted every obstacle and won all hearts.

Those of us who were associated with him intimately through all these years hardly as yet dare to think of the magnitude of our loss.

Very truly yours,

W. E. DODGE, JR.

J. H. CHOATE, ESQ.

# RESOLUTIONS

## RESOLUTIONS

AFTER reading the letter, Mr. Choate moved the following resolution:

*Resolved*, The members of the Union League Club have received with heartfelt sorrow the intelligence of the death of their late associate and Vice-President, Mr. Theodore Roosevelt. He was one of the originators and founders of the Club, and at all times one of its most faithful and devoted members. In its earlier days, when unconditional loyalty was its only test, he was foremost in courage as well as in loyalty, and took a leading and always important and useful part in all those measures of patriotism with which the Club was proudly identified. He recognized the war at the very outset as a dangerous and desperate struggle for the existence of the nation, and gave to its successful prosecution the best efforts of his life.

In all these benevolent enterprises, by which the soldier in the field was aided and sustained, he was a master spirit.

In later years and down to the very day of his untimely death he was a rare and signal example of exalted and unselfish public spirit, laboring zealously to bring about a higher order of public service and an era of better politics. His life is a stirring summons to the men of wealth, of culture, and of leisure in this community to a more active participation in public affairs as the only sure method by which their declining condition may be regenerated. It was thus that he believed and acted. His careful and wise judgment in council, and his vigorous executive ability contributed largely to the success of every public enterprise in which he took part. For many years he gave up to the conduct of public and private charities and other institutions of benevolence his thoughts, his time and his money, but better than all these his inspiring personal presence, by which he animated and vitalized whatever he touched. His manly character, his absolute unselfishness, his

wisdom and courage, and his gentle presence endeared him to us all, and we take a last farewell of him with tears and deep regrets.

*Resolved*, That out of a genuine respect for his memory the foregoing minute be entered upon the records of the Club, and that a copy be transmitted by the President to Mr. Roosevelt's family.

The resolutions were seconded by Mr. John Jay, who highly eulogized Mr. Roosevelt in a few eloquent and exceedingly appropriate remarks. Mr. Jackson S. Schultz followed Mr. Jay, and referred to Mr. Roosevelt's connection with the Union League Club in its earliest days and to the interest he took in the Sanitary Commission and kindred charities during the war. The resolutions were unanimously adopted by a large meeting of the members.

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